

## MEMORANDUM

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WASHINGTON

NSA Review  
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May 13, 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR: HENRY A. KISSINGER

FROM: TOM LATIMER *tl*

SUBJECT: Hanoi May Return to Major Military Action

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A number of bits and pieces of information over the past few months strongly suggest that Hanoi has made a decision to abandon the low profile military attitude which it has maintained for the past several years and to resume a program of major military offensives in South Vietnam. Some of this information pre-dates Lam Son 719 and some post-dates it, suggesting that what we are seeing is more than simply a reaction to that operation.

Among the bits and pieces are:

- Recently intercepted messages in North Vietnam revealing that the number of call-ups for military service in March of this year was higher than for a comparable period in either 1969 or 1970.
- A spate of articles in the North Vietnamese press hectoring the populace, and particularly the youth, to support the drive to beef up the armed forces. Many of those articles emphasize the duty of the North Vietnamese to fight "shoulder-to-shoulder" with their friends in Laos, Cambodia and South Vietnam.
- Several major articles under pseudonyms associated with leading party and military figures, stressing the importance of large-scale, regular force combat, at least in some areas of South Vietnam.
- One important article in the North Vietnamese army journal emphasizing the key role of regular force warfare to support "the masses" in arising to win the "people's mastership rights", words used previously to describe communist efforts during the Tet 1968 campaign.

The timing for such attacks is far from clear but the army journal offered several indicators we might look for as heralds of the offensive:

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- a dramatic increase in enemy road building efforts both in Laos and South Vietnam to provide more and better logistics capability for such an offensive.
- a substantial effort to preposition supplies near targets to be attacked.
- increased deployment of anti-aircraft and artillery units to protect the logistics system and to support units which will make the assaults.

Some analysts believe Hanoi will attempt a major offensive prior to the South Vietnamese presidential election this October but others think the communists will be unable to make sufficient preparations during the coming rainy season to allow a return to major offensive action this fall. Moreover, those who hold the latter view believe Hanoi would prefer to wait until US combat strength has diminished further than the level already announced for October.

- In any event, it appears that Hanoi has decided to make a major try once again at attacking South Vietnamese administrative and military centers -- and possibly remaining US military garrisons -- and that the North Vietnamese are now making the necessary preparations for such an attempt. Such a decision, of course, in no way precludes an associated move in the diplomatic field as well.

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